



Atlantic Council

BRENT SCOWCROFT CENTER
ON INTERNATIONAL SECURITY

All Elements of National Power

Moving Toward a New Interagency
Balance for US Global Engagement

Atlantic Council Combatant Command Task Force

Task Force Chairman: Gen. James L. Jones, Jr., USMC (Ret.)

Project Rapporteur: Lt. Col. Kim Campbell, USAF

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ABOUT THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL COMBATANT COMMAND TASK FORCE

The Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security at the Atlantic Council convened a task force to conduct analysis and to make actionable recommendations regarding a transformed regional interagency balance better suited for engaging with key allies and partners to improve foreign and defense policy execution and advance US interests at the regional level. Chaired by former National Security Advisor General James Jones, the task force was comprised of former senior US government officials, both from the Department of Defense and Department of State, as well as respected thought leaders and experts. The members of the task force helped shape the report's scope, findings, and recommendations but do not necessarily agree with all of its conclusions or recommendations.

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FOREWORD

The United States faces a dynamic and unsettled global security environment that promises to remain with us far into the twenty-first century. Emerging powers, regional instability, individual empowerment, and political turbulence will continue to present the US national security community with new challenges. Yet this environment also offers new opportunities to leverage American strengths to advance our interests and values abroad. In light of this evolving strategic context, the United States must adjust how it engages internationally to foster a more holistic and whole-of-government approach to national security policy.

The US geographic combatant commands are priceless in strategic value, but their structure, function, and organization are increasingly relics of a bygone era. A purely military approach to the myriad of national security challenges that the nation faces will no longer be enough. Indeed, this is one of the key strategic lessons learned from the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. Now is the time to act on these lessons to provide options for a whole-of-government approach to US national security policy that leverages all tools of American power and statecraft. The United States must move forward with a synchronized and coordinated interagency approach from initial planning to execution in order to confront the vast array of challenges and threats in the twenty-first century.

I believe this report provides new analysis and key insights into the issues associated with rebalancing our national instruments of power. Some of the findings and recommendations may be controversial and unorthodox, but I believe they are necessary. Indeed, unconventional thinking is required if the United States is to properly adapt to an unconventional strategic landscape.

I would like to offer a special thanks to project rapporteur, US Air Force Fellow Lt. Col. Kim Campbell, and all of those on the task force who lent their time, talents, and expertise to the project. I commend the Atlantic Council for launching this important study at a critical time in history.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James L. Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with large, connected letters.

Gen. James L. Jones, Jr., USMC (Ret.)

Chairman, Brent Scowcroft Center on International Security
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To deal effectively with long-range global trends and near-term security challenges, the United States requires a broader application of all elements of national power or risks continued disjointed efforts in US global engagement. A transformed interagency balance is a hedge against uncertainty in a dramatically changing world.

As the US National Intelligence Council suggested in its landmark 2012 report, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*, tectonic shifts in several theaters will have significant potential to cause global and regional insecurity in the coming decades. American overseas presence in key regions is and will remain integral to meeting dynamic regional security challenges and specific military threats. The United States faces increased risks and missed opportunities to advance US interests, however, if it continues to focus on the military as the primary government instrument working with allies and partners on a regional scale. The US government currently has only one structure, the geographic combatant command, to execute foreign and defense policy in key regions of the world. At present, there is no mechanism in place to integrate activities of all US government departments and agencies in key regions.

As a result, US government regional actions often are uncoordinated and disconnected. To this end, recent geographic combatant commanders have recognized the need for greater interagency coordination and experimented with strengthening the role and relevance of the interagency within their commands. The intent of this report is to go further and make interagency components the key integrator of elements of national power to better manage foreign and defense policy execution. This report discusses how the United States can resource and restructure for a more balanced, forward-deployed regional approach essential in improving the integration of national instruments of power—diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and others—to advance US interests at the regional level. This task force initially focused solely on restructuring the geographic combatant commands, but it quickly became apparent that higher-priority, untapped points of leverage existed that, if properly resourced, could greatly strengthen US efforts at the regional level. Although these general recommendations are Department of Defense- and Department of State-centric, we recognize the importance for all US government agencies and departments to play a role in a true “whole-of-government” approach. Initial discussion focuses primarily on security issues with the goal of bringing in the full range of economic, political, and other issues and agencies as changes progress. Many of the recommendations could be implemented in the near- to mid-term under the current structures of the Department of State and the Department of Defense. The following general recommendations were developed toward that end:

Interagency synchronization

- The United States should rebalance national instruments of power by providing enhanced Department of State capacity in key regions. Unbalanced resourcing and manpower between the Department of Defense and the Department of State creates significant roadblocks to enhancing interagency presence in the region. A more balanced approach would strengthen US engagement more broadly.
- Department of State regional assistant secretaries should be further empowered to set and coordinate foreign policy within the regions. Currently, assistant secretaries have an explicit requirement to be responsible, but they lack sufficient resources and authority to be effective. Regional assistant secretaries should have the authority to integrate the full range of foreign and security policy as well as diplomatic resources to execute foreign policy on a regional scale.
- There should be an ambassador-level civilian deputy in each geographic combatant command with deep regional experience and expertise. Absent crisis or war, the civilian deputy would, on behalf of the commander, oversee and integrate security cooperation efforts with allies and partners. The civilian deputy could also act as the senior political adviser (POLAD) who would have direct liaison with the Department of State regional assistant secretary. Likewise, the senior political-military advisers in the Department of State regional bureaus should have direct “reach-forward” access to applicable geographic combatant command leadership as well as a direct link to civilian deputies/senior POLADs in the geographic combatant commands. If the civilian deputy and senior POLAD are two different positions (depending on combatant command structure), then the civilian deputy would serve as the senior-most civilian representative within the combatant command and the primary link to the Department of State. The senior POLAD would act as the policy adviser to the combatant commander.

- To reach the fullest potential and ensure sustained, effective change, interagency legislation to support these changes would be essential, entailing provisions that would direct departments and agencies to adopt a whole-of-government approach. Legislation could use the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 as a model.

Organizational transformation

- Geographic combatant commands should be renamed to signify the importance of a whole-of-government approach. A name change to “unified regional commands” would reinforce efforts to coordinate and integrate instruments for foreign and defense policy execution and would represent broader capabilities and engagement efforts than strictly a war-fighting approach.
- Allies and partners could play a more significant role in geographic combatant commands; international involvement could strengthen allied/partner nation support for US policies and improve prepositioning and posture opportunities.
- Geographic combatant commanders should be assigned for sufficient time (at least three or four years versus two or three years at present) to gain a deeper understanding of the region and help fortify relations with regional counterparts.
- Divergence of regional boundaries among the Department of Defense, Department of State, and National Security Council causes friction and confusion; a common “map” would enhance a whole-of-government approach.

Efficiencies

- Certain regionally prepositioned supplies and equipment should be managed in a more coordinated manner by departments and agencies. Integrated prepositioning would save money and manpower, eliminate redundancies, and provide for a synchronized approach to crisis response resulting in quicker reaction times.
- Major efficiencies can be gained by returning “back office” functions from the geographic combatant commands and their service component commands to the Services and the Joint Staff, thereby streamlining geographic combatant command headquarters staffs. The secretary of defense and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should request a qualified outside group to assess details and report back in sixty to ninety days.

The task force also evaluated three specific restructuring options that would help move US regional presence toward a more effective interagency balance. Although these restructuring options require legislative and organizational changes and are a move away from long-standing institutional norms, they are worthy of discussion and should be evaluated based on emerging twenty-first century strategic and fiscal realities. The following restructuring options should be explored:

1. An unconventional end-state would be the creation of an “Interagency Regional Center” that would act as a regional interagency headquarters for foreign and defense policy. This new organization would result in the unification of the Department of Defense and the Department of State (as well as other agencies and departments) at the regional level. The Interagency Regional Center (IRC) would be led by an “interagency regional director” with regional experience and expertise who would report directly to the president or vice president of the United States. The president develops the grand strategy and establishes national security strategy, while the regional directors would implement that strategy at the regional level. The regional directors would advise and participate in the National Security Council as requested. Regional directors would also convene to discuss cross-regional issues and activities. The IRCs would ensure long-lasting integration of all instruments of national power.

The interagency regional director would have a military and civilian deputy. The military deputy would focus on defense issues while the civilian deputy would focus on diplomacy, development, and other critical nonmilitary issues. The civilian deputy would also act as a regional ambassador-at-large who would have coordination authority for country ambassadors and other civilian-led organizations such as Treasury, Justice, and Commerce. Country ambassadors would still formally report directly to the Secretary of State through the IRC. The civilian deputy would be in charge of coordinating all nonmilitary agencies and organizations at the regional level. During wartime, the military commander would report directly to the president through the secretary of defense as in the current combatant command structure, while the director and civilian deputy would focus

on nation-building and postconflict operations. During peacetime, the military would report through the IRC for engagement. For this approach to be successful, peacetime and wartime responsibilities would need to be clearly delineated and understood.

2. An intermediate approach would colocate the Department of State regional bureaus with the geographic combatant commands. These locations would be ideal to strengthen the authority of regional bureaus and allow the bureaus to operate more nimbly. Colocation of the regional assistant secretary (or alternatively, a deputy assistant secretary) and his/her staff with the geographic combatant command would allow for regional-level integration with a more unified approach and presence. Colocation of other departments and agencies, such as Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) regional offices, should also be considered.
3. An alternative intermediate approach would be for the geographic combatant command civilian deputy to act also as a regional ambassador-at-large who would have coordination authority for country ambassadors and other civilian-led organizations in the region. His/her mission under this authority would be to coordinate US actions, issues, and initiatives within the region and bordering regions. The civilian deputy would have the authority to require consultation between regional organizations, but would not have the authority to compel agreement. This coordination authority would be a consultation relationship, not an authority through which chain of command would be exercised. This approach works under the current structure, but adds integration by bringing together all agencies operating within the region to coordinate regional activities.

It is critical that the United States think about how to adapt to emerging twenty-first-century realities, both strategic and fiscal, particularly as the United States transitions from a decade at war. Long-range global trends and near-term security challenges demand a broader use of instruments of national power. The United States must take advantage of its strategic assets, and resource and restructure for a better balanced, forward deployed approach. The secretary of defense, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the secretary of state, and the national security advisor should commission a detailed follow-on study to this report to further evaluate key insights and execution of suggested recommendations.

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STRATEGIC CONTEXT

To deal effectively with long-range global trends and near-term security challenges, the United States requires a broader application of all elements of national power or risks disjointed efforts in US global engagement. A transformed interagency balance is a hedge against uncertainty in a dramatically changing world.

As the US National Intelligence Council suggested in its landmark 2012 report, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*, tectonic shifts in several theaters will have significant potential to cause global and regional insecurity in the coming decades.¹ A regional strategy is fundamental in dealing with these issues, and it is essential that the United States better integrate the national instruments of power—diplomatic, informational, military, economic, and others—to advance US interests at the regional level. A transformed regional interagency balance will help mitigate risks while ensuring a strategy-driven US government approach for foreign and defense policy execution that reassures friends and allies and reinforces US commitment to key regions.

IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE UNITED STATES BETTER INTEGRATE THE NATIONAL INSTRUMENTS OF POWER—DIPLOMATIC, INFORMATIONAL, MILITARY, ECONOMIC, AND OTHERS—TO ADVANCE US INTERESTS AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL.

It is impractical to tackle many current and future challenges without approaching them from a regional perspective. Country-by-country execution of foreign policy by US ambassadors may not always be the most effective or successful approach. For example, water supply, food distribution, and security all require a regional outlook especially with increasing competition for scarce resources, the growing likelihood of large-scale natural disasters, and the propensity for intensifying regional conflicts. Overall execution of

foreign policy can be improved upon by having regional policy development and execution guided by regional execution agencies. At this time, the United States has only one government structure, the geographic combatant command, for execution of foreign and defense policy at the regional level. The United States will face increased risks and missed opportunities to advance US interests if it focuses mainly on a military approach at the regional level. There is currently no mechanism in place to integrate activities of all US government departments and agencies in key regions.

As a result, US government regional actions often are uncoordinated and disconnected. To this end, recent combatant commanders have recognized the need for greater interagency coordination and have experimented in strengthening the role and relevance of the interagency within their commands. The intent of this report is to go further and make interagency components the key integrator of elements of national power to better manage foreign and defense policy execution. This report will discuss how the United States can better take advantage of its strategic assets, and resource and restructure for a more balanced, forward-deployed regional approach.

Both the Department of State and the Department of Defense have recognized the need for greater coordination and collaboration in the execution of national security policy. The 2010 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review stated: “Development, diplomacy, and defense, as the core pillars of American foreign policy, must mutually reinforce and complement one another in an integrated, comprehensive approach to national security.”² The 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) stated that “the Department is committed to finding creative, effective, and efficient ways to achieve our goals and assist in making strategic choices. Innovation—within our own Department and in our interagency and international partnerships—is a central line of effort.”³ Furthermore, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel’s speech at the Munich Security Conference in February 2014 outlined the need to restore “balance to the relationship between American defense and diplomacy.”⁴

1 US National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*, http://www.dni.gov/files/documents/GlobalTrends_2030.pdf.

2 Department of State, *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review: Leading through Civilian Power*, <http://www.state.gov/s/dmr/qddr/>.

3 Department of Defense, *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014*, http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2014_Quadrennial_Defense_Review.pdf.

4 Secretary of Defense, *Munich Security Conference*, <http://www.defense.gov/Speeches/Speech.aspx?SpeechID=1828>.



US Navy forces unload supplies during 2010 earthquake relief efforts in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Photo credit: Petty Officer 2nd Class Daniel Barker, USN.

This report examines how geographic combatant commands could be internally realigned to meet new circumstances and engagement requirements and to better integrate interagency tools for foreign and defense policy execution in key regions. This report will also offer general recommendations that will help the United States move toward a regional interagency balance for engaging with key allies and partners that would advance US interests on a regional scale. It is critical that the United States think about how to adapt to emerging twenty-first century realities, both strategic and fiscal, particularly as the United States transitions from a decade at war.

As it ends its sustained combat role in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States needs to ensure that it captures critical lessons learned and best practices from interagency successes and failures. Wartime experience has proven that interagency integration is critical to successful operations. Although the initial stages of Iraq and Afghanistan prioritized military operations, reconstruction, stability efforts, and political developments necessarily blurred the lines between military force and diplomacy due to a challenging and unsettled environment. Military and civilian officials were forced to work together and learned hard lessons regarding interagency collaboration and coordination. It is imperative that these lessons be formalized and used in peacetime efforts so that the US government does not have to reinvent the wheel as new crises emerge.

An effective interagency process that achieves unity of effort is absolutely essential to executing foreign and defense policy and advancing US interests now and in the future. A coordinated, integrated, and synchronized interagency plan could have ensured that the United States was prepared to address humanitarian assistance, governance, rule of law, and economic issues that emerged in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, up to this point, many attempts at transforming the interagency process have not reached their full potential due to structural weaknesses in the interagency process as well as a lack of personnel, training, doctrine, and—most importantly—a forcing function to make them work in peacetime.

The opportunity for significant, effective change for interagency coordination and balance is greater now than ever before: the US military's role in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan is coming to a close; the Department of Defense recently completed the QDR that affirmed that innovation within the interagency is a central line of effort; the president made a strategic decision to increase focus on the Asia-Pacific region and rebalance US engagements, activities, and resources toward and within the region; and the administration is in its final term where enough current administration officials understand the need for real change. As all of these factors converge, it is prudent to have an open discussion of how a transformed regional interagency balance for global engagement could help the United States meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

PRINCIPLES AND ASSUMPTIONS

Regional overseas presence remains integral to meeting dynamic challenges and emerging threats in the twenty-first century. Security challenges such as terrorism, proliferation, and international criminal networks all require a more effective US government regional presence. Furthermore, the challenges presented by a rising China, the reemergence of a revanchist Russia, and terrorism/extremism in the Mideast and Africa also give credence to establishing a strong posture in key regions. For better or for worse, geographic combatant commands are currently the best resourced and most visible manifestations of US national power and interests in key overseas regions. With adequate resources, the Department of Defense can help manage risks and meet challenges (including those arising from reduced force structure) by employing the existing geographic combatant commands as assurance tools to mitigate regional concerns and advance US interests.

REGIONAL
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Geographic combatant commands allow the global presence and reach necessary to protect and advance US interests in key overseas regions. To improve efficiency and effectiveness of foreign and defense policy execution and advance US interests on a regional scale, however, the geographic combatant commands could be internally reorganized and augmented to meet new circumstances and engagement requirements within a whole-of-government approach. Former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated that “defense, diplomacy and development were not separate entities, either in substance or process, but that indeed they had to be viewed as part of an integrated whole and that the whole of government then had to be enlisted in their pursuit.”⁵ The Department of Defense defines whole-of-government as an approach that “integrates the collaborative efforts of the departments and agencies of the USG [United States government] to achieve unity of effort. Under unified action, a whole-of-government approach identifies combinations of the full range of available USG capabilities and resources that reinforce progress and create synergies.”⁶ If the geographic combatant commands are restructured toward this whole-of-government approach, then it is imperative that any restructuring must not detract from combatant commands’ capabilities for executing their core warfighting functions and vital missions.

There are four primary core functions for geographic combatant commands:

- Geographic combatant commands must deter, detect, and help prevent attacks against the United States.
- When directed, geographic combatant commands will support and protect the interests of the United States.
- Geographic combatant commands must develop, coordinate, and implement theater engagement plans that support US interests and build partner nation capability and capacity.
- Geographic combatant commands must respond to natural disasters and humanitarian crises within authorities, means, and capabilities.

⁵ Jim Garamone, “New National Strategy Takes Whole-of-Government Approach,” American Forces Press Service, May 27, 2010, <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=59377>.

⁶ *Interorganizational Coordination during Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-08 (Washington DC: The Joint Staff, 2004), p. xiii.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

This task force initially focused solely on restructuring the geographic combatant commands, but it quickly became apparent that higher-priority, untapped points of leverage existed that, if properly resourced, could greatly strengthen US efforts at the regional level. Although these general recommendations are Department of Defense- and Department of State-centric, we recognize the importance for all US government agencies and departments to play a role in a true “whole-of-government” approach. Initial discussion focuses primarily on security issues with the goal of bringing in the full range of economic, political, and environmental issues and agencies as changes progress. Many of the recommendations could be implemented in the near- to mid-term under the current internal structure of the Department of State and the Department of Defense. If implemented, these recommendations move toward a regional interagency balance, but still may fall short of fully executing a regional whole-of-government approach. The United States needs resources along with reorganization to compete effectively around the globe and to see a significant impact on foreign and defense policy execution.

Interagency synchronization

1. The United States should rebalance national instruments of power by providing enhanced Department of State capacity in key regions. Today, the United States faces increased risks and missed opportunities to advance US interests because it has focused on the military as the primary government instrument working with allies and partners at the regional level. As the United States ends its military role in the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, it runs the risk of forgetting many of the lessons learned regarding the importance of a whole-of-government approach. Many of these critical wartime lessons and best practices also apply to peacetime and would improve US global engagement efforts with the ultimate goal of preventing future conflicts. The United States is at a key juncture where it can focus on these lessons and take action to formally implement changes; however, adequate resourcing is critical for greater synchronization among US government agencies. Specifically, unbalanced resourcing and manpower between the Department of Defense and the Department of State creates significant roadblocks to enhancing interagency presence in the region. A balanced approach would strengthen US engagement more broadly. Significant congressional intervention and action is required to move forward with balanced resource options to ensure proper adjustment of budgets, manpower, equipment, training, missions, and responsibilities. Due to a challenging climate, it will require a unified Department of Defense/Department of State effort to begin to move forward with these changes.
2. Department of State regional assistant secretaries should be further empowered to set and coordinate the execution of foreign policy within the regions. Currently, assistant secretaries have an explicit requirement to be responsible, but they lack sufficient resources and authority to be effective. Regional assistant secretaries should have the authority to integrate the full range of foreign and defense policy as well as diplomatic resources to execute foreign policy on a regional scale. The United States needs to get ahead of future problems and reduce the seams that hamper foreign policy. To do this, the connection between the geographic combatant commands and the regional bureaus needs to be strengthened. The regional assistant secretaries need to be able to set the agenda in the region and have the ability to call on resources to implement the agenda. Providers, such as the US Agency for International Development (USAID), Drug Enforcement Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and others would then have to align their resources with policy goals. A rewrite of regional assistant secretary job requirements is needed to explicitly establish their authority to be a counterpart to the geographic combatant commanders. For this recommendation to be successful, the Office of the Secretary of Defense would have to defer to the Department of State on broader policy formulation but would still retain policy oversight on geographic combatant command activities. The National Security Council would also have to concur and honor the empowerment of the regional assistant secretaries.
3. There should be an ambassador-level civilian deputy in each geographic combatant command with deep regional experience and expertise. Absent crisis or war, the civilian deputy would, on behalf of the commander, oversee and integrate security cooperation efforts with allies and partners. Currently, only three of the six geographic combatant commands have civilian deputy commanders. The civilian deputy would provide

PERSONNEL EXCHANGE—THE FIRST STEP

On January 4, 2012, the Department of State and the Department of Defense signed a memorandum of understanding that specified the terms and conditions under which certain personnel from one agency will be assigned on a nonreimbursable basis to the other agency. The memorandum of understanding further stipulated that “the DoD and DoS have a shared responsibility for national security and need to coordinate carefully on numerous issues affecting both foreign policy and defense. The long-standing practice of personnel exchanges between these two agencies has greatly facilitated this coordination. The exchange of personnel enhances the breadth of each agency’s viewpoints, develops a strong cadre of political-military experts, and through the selection of good employees for exchange, makes substantive contributions to the work of both agencies.”

civilian representation at the command level within all geographic combatant commands. The civilian deputy should be the senior diplomatic adviser and be able to act as a senior representative of the secretary of state.

The civilian deputy could also act as the senior POLAD who would have direct liaison with the Department of State regional assistant secretary. However, to be effective, it is imperative that the civilian deputy/POLAD be properly resourced and staffed. The senior POLAD should serve as the combatant command focal point on diplomatic issues for interaction with the National Security Council, Department of State, relevant US embassies, and foreign diplomatic missions in the region. The senior POLAD should also assist the command in developing political/diplomatic strategies and speak authoritatively for the command on relevant political issues to diplomatic counterparts.⁷

One of the central roles of the POLAD is to ensure that the US government speaks with one voice. POLADs are in a position to advise geographic combatant commanders on the command’s action and activities being in accord with US foreign policy. Officially (per Annex A—Descriptions of Department of State positions at DoD, Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Defense and the Department of State regarding Non-Reimbursable Exchange of Personnel), the POLAD reports directly to the commander and works closely with the deputy commander to provide advice and support on foreign policy issues of concern and relevance to the command.⁸

However, Annex A should also specify that the senior POLAD should have direct liaison with the Department of State regional assistant secretary to improve coordination and communication between the regional bureau and the geographic combatant command. Likewise, the senior political-military advisers in the Department of State regional bureaus should have direct “reach-forward” to applicable geographic combatant command leadership as well as a direct link to civilian deputy/senior POLADs in the geographic combatant commands.

If the civilian deputy and senior POLAD are two different positions, then the civilian deputy would be the senior most civilian representative within the combatant command and would be the primary link to the Department of State. The senior POLAD would act as the policy adviser to the combatant commander. These relationships and communication links should be explicitly defined in their roles and responsibilities. Ultimately, it is essential that both the Department of State and the Department of Defense are aware of and are leveraging the resources that currently exist.

4. To reach the fullest potential and ensure sustained, effective change, interagency legislation to support these changes would be essential. This interagency legislation would entail provisions that would direct departments and agencies to adopt a whole-of-government approach and think beyond organizational cultures and traditions. This legislation could use the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 that directed military services to work together achieving critical efficiencies and improved operability as a model.

Reforms for training and advancement should specifically be included in any interagency legislation. A 2009 Government Accountability Office (GAO) study on interagency collaboration reported that agencies’ personnel systems do

⁷ European Command (EUCOM) job description for the civilian deputy to the commander. <http://www.eucom.mil/organization/command-structure/civilian-deputy-to-the-commander-foreign-policy-advisor>.

⁸ “Annex A – Descriptions of State Department Positions at DoD,” *Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Defense and the Department of State regarding Non-reimbursable Exchange of Personnel, January 4, 2012.*



President Obama and Vice President Biden meet with combatant commanders and military leadership. Photo credit: Pete Souza, Official White House Photo.

not always facilitate interagency collaboration, with interagency assignments often not being considered as career enhancing or recognized in performance management systems.⁹ Under interagency legislation, personnel submitted for interagency exchange or liaison positions should be among those considered the most outstanding of that agency. Additionally, in order for promotion and advancement, personnel would have to be designated as interagency qualified. Reforms such as these have ensured a highly capable joint force and can be carried over to the interagency environment to facilitate greater collaboration and professional development of US government personnel involved in national security.

Organizational transformation

1. Geographic combatant commands should be renamed to signify the importance of a whole-of-government approach. A name change to “unified regional command” would reinforce efforts to coordinate and integrate foreign and defense policy execution and would represent broader capabilities and engagement efforts than strictly a war-fighting approach. However, there is also the view that a name change would not be a good idea since the

fundamental purpose of the geographic combatant commands is to execute effective joint military combat operations. Strategic messaging would be necessary with any name change to ensure that it does not appear as US disengagement, specifically among our allies and partners. It is also appropriate that the current nomenclature be examined to determine if a name change is sufficiently advantageous.

2. Allies and partners could play a more significant role in geographic combatant commands. Allies and partners should fill positions (including key leadership roles, and exchange and liaison positions) within the geographic combatant command headquarters structure. International involvement could strengthen allied and partner nation support for US policy in the region and improve pre-positioning and posture opportunities. Allies and partners might also be better positioned to support the US message. Australian contributions at Pacific Command (PACOM), for example, can be used as a model for allied and partner nation involvement. Currently, Australians hold just over thirty positions in PACOM, including several key leadership roles.¹⁰ Allied/partner involvement would allow Department of State regional bureaus an additional

⁹ Government Accountability Office, “Interagency Collaboration: Key Issues for Congressional Oversight of National Security Strategies, Organizations, Workforce, and Information Sharing,” <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-09-904SP>.

¹⁰ Sheridan Kearnan, Minister Counselor, Defense Policy, Australian Defense Staff, Washington, remarks to Atlantic Council task force, January 16, 2014.

Figure 1. Departments of Defense and State Areas of Responsibility



Source: *Joint Force Quarterly*.

means of interface. However, allied and partner involvement should not be limited to integration at geographic combatant commands. They should also be involved with and included in strategic planning with Department of Defense, Department of State, and other agencies and departments. Allies and partners should be involved with strategy reviews and force planning at the highest levels in order to meet the emerging twenty-first-century strategic and fiscal realities.

- Geographic combatant commanders should be assigned for sufficient time (at least three or four years) to gain a deeper understanding of the region and help fortify relations with regional counterparts. Currently, most commanders serve for two to three years. Relationships with US allies and partners make a difference and longevity enables commands to be effective and efficient at accomplishing core functions. It is also imperative that geographic combatant commanders have regional experience and are allowed sufficient time to prepare before taking command. As the United States progresses toward a more prominent role for regional diplomats, military commanders must also be more steeped in regional matters under their purview.
- Divergence of regional boundaries among the Department of Defense, Department of State, and National Security Council causes friction and confusion. A common “map” would enhance a whole-of-government approach. Currently, US government agencies and departments must

coordinate with many different organizations in their planning efforts. The number of organizations is increased due to a lack of alignment among regional boundaries within these agencies and departments.

The 2011 National Defense Authorization Act required the comptroller general of the United States to conduct a study to assess the need for and implications of a common alignment of world regions in the internal organization of departments and agencies of the federal government with international responsibilities.¹¹ The GAO study addressed the advantages and disadvantages of a common geographic alignment as well as obstacles to implementing a common alignment. Geographic alignment is primarily based on the ability to achieve agency-specific mission objectives, to reflect commonalities among countries with cultural, historic, or economic connections, and to address management issues (e.g., balanced workloads) within the organizations.¹² According to the study, all of the agencies indicated that they needed to maintain the flexibility to reorganize geographic alignments to better meet mission requirements. One of the primary advantages of a common geographic alignment would be that there would

11 National Defense Authorization Act 2011, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-111publ383/pdf/PLAW-111publ383.pdf>.

12 Government Accountability Office, “Interagency Collaboration: Implications of a Common Alignment of World Regions among Select Federal Agencies,” <http://www.gao.gov/assets/100/97628.pdf>.

be a decrease in the number of organizations to coordinate with when conducting operations. One of the primary disadvantages of a common alignment would be that it would limit the ability for organizations to realign themselves based on mission objectives.

A common alignment would facilitate a whole-of-government approach and would lay the foundation for effective interagency collaboration. As difficult as this may be to achieve due to cultural practices and concerns in individual agencies, it should be made a priority for the greater good of the nation. A study should be commissioned to determine the most appropriate geographic alignment that would represent the majority of the interagency organizations. This approach would foster an alignment that would not overly emphasize a specific national instrument of power over another.

Efficiencies

1. Certain regionally prepositioned supplies and equipment should be managed in a more coordinated manner by departments and agencies. Integrated prepositioning would save money/manpower, eliminate redundancies, and provide for a synchronized approach to crisis response resulting in quicker reaction times. For example, USAID humanitarian supplies could be colocated with geographic combatant command supplies, as long as there are similar storage requirements. Colocated supplies and equipment would eliminate redundancies and provide for an expeditious and synchronized approach to crisis response resulting in quicker reaction times.
2. There are potentially major efficiencies that can be gained by returning “back office” functions from the geographic combatant commands and their service component commands to the Services and Joint Staff and otherwise streamlining geographic combatant command headquarters staffs. Geographic combatant commands have a fundamental requirement to operate and their organizational structure should focus primarily on operations. Over the past ten years, regional combatant commands have grown significantly due to increasing mission requirements and there is now a strong need to prioritize, restructure, and eliminate redundancies. A GAO study confirmed that authorized military and civilian positions increased by about 50 percent from fiscal

years 2001 through 2012, to about 10,100 authorized positions. In addition, mission and headquarters support costs at the combatant commands more than doubled from fiscal years 2007 through 2012, to about \$1.1 billion.¹³ Returning “back-office” functions, such as personnel, travel processing, human relations, resource allocation and programming, and communications, to the services and joint staff could facilitate reducing some of these rising costs.

The Department of Defense can also gain efficiencies by eliminating redundancies and duplication of effort between geographic combatant commands and component headquarters. Directorates J2 (Intelligence), J5 (Strategy, Plans & Policy), and J8 (Resources & Assessment) should all be specifically addressed for redundancies between the headquarters staffs. Additionally, the role of combat support agencies, such as the Defense Logistics Agency and Defense Intelligence Agency, should be evaluated in terms of redundancies and duplication of effort in their support to geographic combatant commands. However, it is critical that resources are aligned with mission requirements. Under the current and future fiscal environment, it may be necessary to shed resourcing of less defense-centric roles and activities to ensure there is appropriate focus on the core functions. A geographic combatant command must have the ability to function efficiently and effectively during crisis response as well. A rapidly deployable augmentation capability that is trained and ready to support the geographic combatant commands in times of crisis is critical to this approach.

Finally, the United States needs to evaluate long-term cost savings associated with significant reductions in contract support to the geographic combatant commands. A GAO study recently confirmed that the availability of data on the number of contractor personnel or full-time equivalents varied across the combatant commands, and thus trends could not be identified.¹⁴ Unfortunately, combatant commands have not been required to maintain historical data on the number of contractor personnel. The secretary of defense and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff should charter a qualified outside group to critically assess the status quo and report back in sixty to ninety days.

13 Government Accountability Office, “DOD Needs to Periodically Review and Improve Visibility of Combatant Commands’ Resources,” <http://www.gao.gov/assets/660/654638.pdf>.

14 Ibid.

SPECIFIC RESTRUCTURING OPTIONS

The task force also evaluated three specific restructuring options that would help move US regional presence toward a more effective interagency balance. With any structure changes, strategic messaging as well as education and training would be required for all personnel. Although these restructuring options require legislative and behavioral change and are a move away from long-standing institutional norms, they are worthy of discussion and should be evaluated based on emerging twenty-first-century strategic and fiscal realities.

Unconventional end-state: Interagency regional center

The unconventional approach highlights the issues that the United States should be thinking about to fully move toward a regional interagency balance. If the United States were to start over and completely redefine how it approached foreign and defense policy execution and the advancement of US interests at the regional level, what would it look like? Although this may be the most difficult option to execute in the near to medium term, it is useful to analyze and assess a regional structure if the United States wiped the slate clean. This bold option will take time and effort to build interagency stakeholder buy-in and may be difficult for agencies to adapt.

An unconventional end-state would be the creation of an “Interagency Regional Center” (IRC) that would act as a regional interagency headquarters for foreign and

defense policy. This new organization would result in the unification of the Department of Defense and the Department of State (as well as other agencies and departments) at the regional level (see figure 2). The IRC would be led by an “interagency regional director” with deep regional experience and expertise who would report directly to the president or vice president of the United States. The president develops the grand strategy and establishes national security strategy, while the regional directors would implement that strategy at the regional level. The regional directors would advise and participate in the National Security Council as requested. Regional directors would also convene to discuss cross-regional issues and activities as required. The IRCs would ensure long-lasting integration of all instruments of national power.

An IRC would ideally be forward-located within the region and would provide implementation support for country ambassadors and country teams. The IRC would be responsible for orchestrating and enforcing presidential policy and guidance. Departments and agencies outside of the IRC would still have the responsibility to organize, train, equip, acquire, and maintain capabilities as well as formulate policies to support presidential guidance. The interagency regional directors (IRDs) would retain overall authority and responsibility for execution of regional foreign and defense policy.

Figure 2. Unconventional End-State: Interagency Regional Center

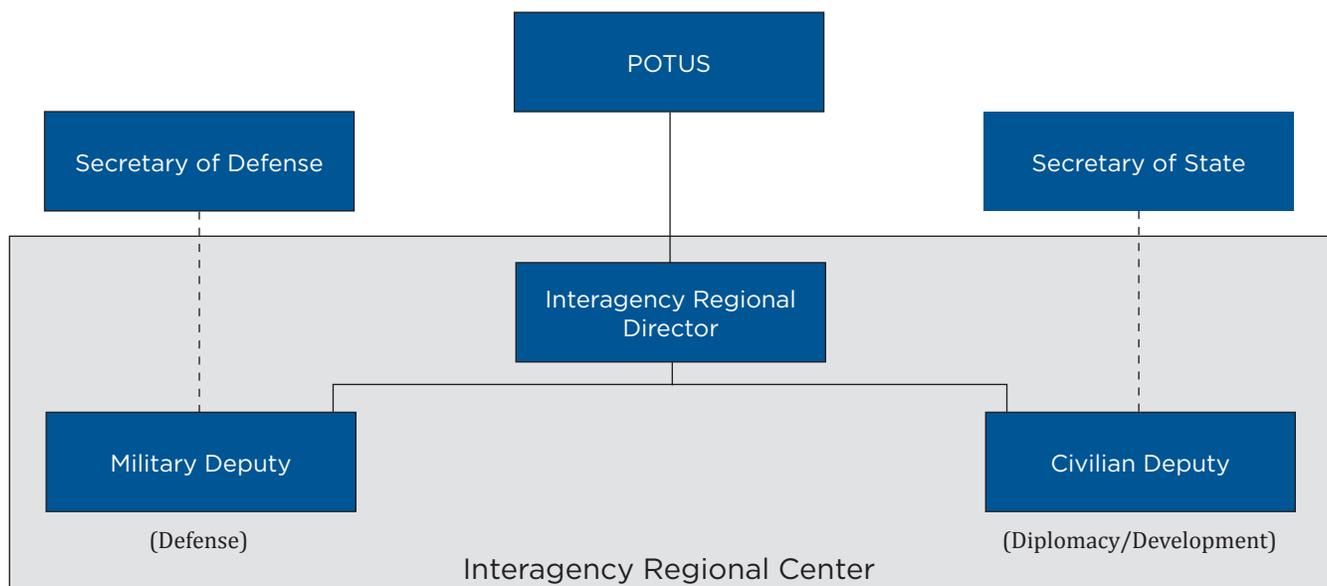
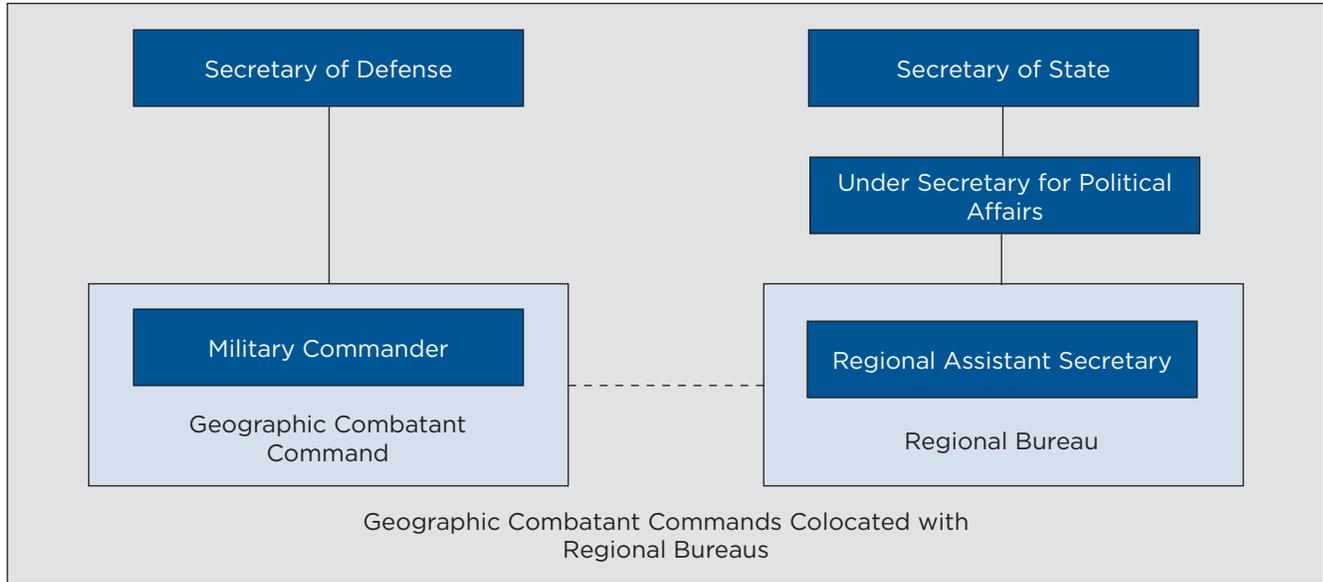


Figure 3. Intermediate Approach: Colocation



The IRD would have a military and civilian deputy. The military deputy would focus on defense issues while the civilian deputy would focus on diplomacy, development, and other critical nonmilitary issues. The civilian deputy would also act as a regional ambassador-at-large who would have coordination authority for country ambassadors and other civilian-led departments such as Treasury, Justice, and Commerce. Country ambassadors would still formally report directly to the secretary of state through the IRC. The civilian deputy would be in charge of coordinating all nonmilitary agency activity at the regional level. During wartime, the military commander would report directly to the president through the secretary of defense as in the current combatant command structure, while the director and civilian deputy would focus on institution-building and post-conflict operations. During peacetime, the military would report to the secretary of defense through the IRC for peacetime engagement. For this approach to be successful, peacetime and wartime responsibilities would need to be clearly delineated and understood.

A unified organization would improve both defense and diplomatic planning processes and coordination on the use of scarce resources. The IRC would integrate and synchronize both Department of Defense and Department of State objectives within the region. This structure should also assist in accommodating funding differences between the Department of Defense and the Department of State. Currently, unequal resourcing between the Department of Defense and the Department of State creates significant roadblocks to enhancing interagency presence at the regional level. Under the new structure, the “Interagency Integrated Priority List” would better balance defense, diplomacy, and development issues.

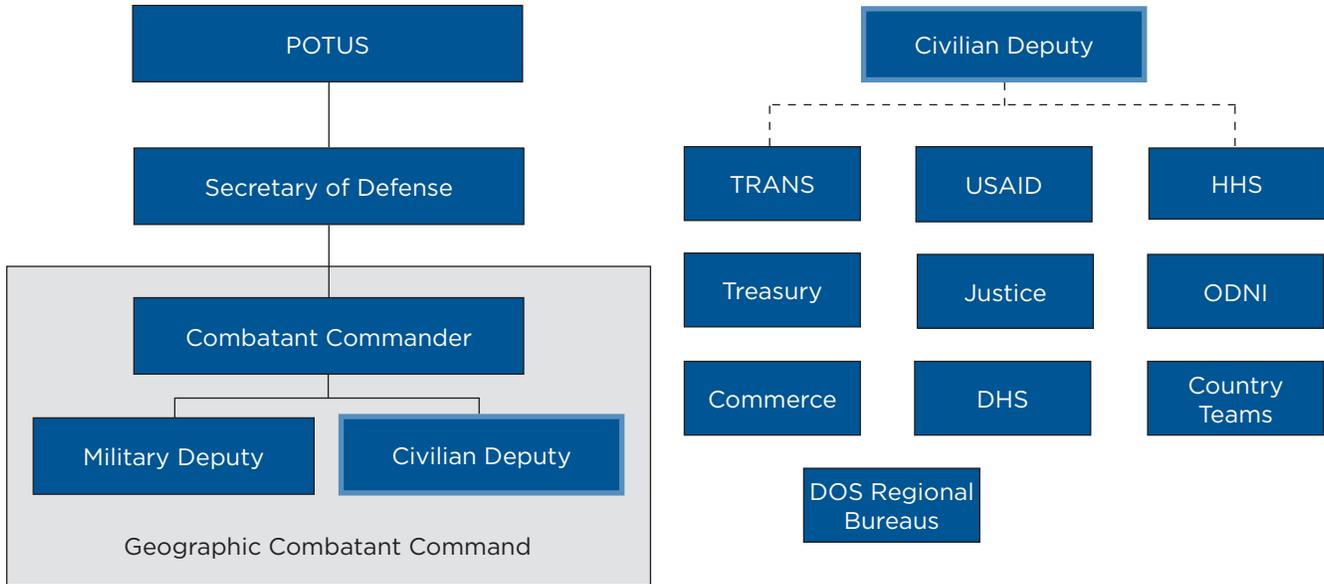
Intermediate approach: Colocate geographic combatant commands and regional bureaus

Another option is an intermediate approach that would promote greater unity of effort without creating a new organization. This approach would colocate the Department of State regional bureaus with the geographic combatant commands (see figure 3). Currently, all Department of State regional bureaus are located in Washington, DC. This intermediate approach would move the regional assistant secretary and his/her staff to the same location as the geographic combatant commands, strengthen the authority of regional bureaus, and allow the bureaus to operate more nimbly.

An alternative would be to move a deputy regional assistant secretary and staff to the geographic combatant command, and leave the regional assistant secretary and some staff in Washington, DC. This deputy assistant secretary would have direct contact with the regional assistant secretary, but would be forward-based with the geographic combatant command. Although not ideal, due to the significant difference in rank structure between the military commander (four-star) and a deputy assistant secretary, this alternative option may be more palatable to some Department of State officials.

Colocation of other departments and agencies, such as CIA regional offices, should also be considered. Colocation would allow for integration of the Department of Defense and the Department of State (as well as other key agencies and departments) at the regional level. Countries in the region would enjoy a more unified approach and presence among US government departments and agencies.

Figure 4. Intermediate Approach: Coordination Authority



Possible limitations to this approach would be that some international partners would see the move as a “militarization of US foreign policy” and the regional assistant secretaries becoming subordinate to the military. Because of the difference in the number of military personnel versus civilian diplomatic personnel working at the center, the image presented to visiting diplomats may be that they are visiting a military headquarters versus a diplomatic regional center. Strategic messaging would be critical to ensuring the success of this approach. While colocation may provide more integration at the regional level, it may still lack the overall strategic coordination and integration of policies in Washington. Additionally, a common map between the Department of Defense and the Department of State would be required to facilitate this approach.

Intermediate approach: Civilian deputy with coordination authority

An alternative intermediate approach would be for the geographic combatant command civilian deputy to act as a regional ambassador-at-large that would have coordination authority for country ambassadors and other civilian-led organizations (see figure 4) in the region. This approach builds a civilian perspective into the combatant commands and establishes a stronger civilian voice into the combatant command structure.

The civilian deputy’s mandate under this authority would be to coordinate US actions, issues, and initiatives within the region and bordering regions. The civilian deputy would coordinate all executive department and agency activity within the region in the development and implementation of US foreign and defense policies. The civilian deputy would have the authority to require consultation between regional organizations but would

not have the authority to compel agreement. This authority would be a coordinating relationship, not an authority through which chain of command would be exercised. This approach works under the current structure but adds integration by bringing together all agencies operating within the region to coordinate regional activities. A strong relationship between the civilian deputy and the regional assistant secretary would be essential for the success of this approach.

CONCLUSION

Long-range global trends and near-term security challenges demand a more sophisticated use of the instruments of national power. The United States needs to move toward a regional interagency balance for engaging with key allies and partners that improves efficiency and effectiveness of US foreign and defense policy execution and advance US interests at the regional level. It is critical that the United States think about how to adapt to emerging twenty-first-century realities, both strategic and fiscal, particularly as it transitions from a decade at war. The United States must better take advantage of its strategic assets, and resource and restructure for a more balanced, forward-deployed regional approach.

Although the recommendations and options presented in this report are not necessarily the whole solution—nor will they be easy to implement—it is necessary to open the discussion about better aligning our national interagency structure to be ready for the next set of asymmetrical challenges. The members of the task force hope that this report will help stimulate a serious discussion inside and outside of government.

The secretary of defense, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the secretary of state, and the national security advisor should commission a follow-on study to further evaluate and make actionable the key insights and recommendations of this report.

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